

SCHOOL HEALTH, TENNESSEE, 1993-1994 to 2001-2002

The Prevalence of Disabilities among Students

- Of 900,510 students in Tennessee schools in school year 2001-2002 (estimated by average daily membership), close to 1 in 14 was learning-disabled. A total of 64,235 or 7.1% of students were learning-disabled in Tennessee. This total represents a 12.3% decrease from a prevalence of 8.1% in 1993-94.
- Counties with the highest prevalence of learning-disabled students in 2001-2002 were Grundy and Overton Counties, at 18.5% and 13.5%, respectively. Haywood and Pickett Counties had the lowest percentages of learning-disabled students, at 2.4% and 4.4%, respectively. Of the 14 TDH regions, Madison County had the highest prevalence of learning disability in students at 12.1%, followed by Northeast Tennessee at 9.1%. The regions with the lowest prevalence were Shelby County at 5.5% and Southwest Tennessee at 6%.
- Students with conditions making them eligible for school-based special education services as a percentage of all students (estimated by average daily membership in Tennessee schools) in 2001-2002 is as follows:
 - ▶ 7.1% of students were reported as learning disabled
 - ▶ 4.6% as speech- or language-impaired
 - ▶ 2.3% as mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed
 - ▶ 2.3% as gifted
 - ▶ 1.5% as health-impaired or physically impaired
 - ▶ 0.3% as hearing-impaired and/or visually impaired and
 - ▶ 1.6% as having other disabilities¹¹.
- The prevalence of these conditions has remained stable from 1993-94 to 2001-2002. However, the prevalence of students who are classified as learning-disabled has declined from 8.1% to 7.1% or by 12.3% over the period.
- In Tennessee in 2001-2002, 13,180 school children, or 1.46% of all students, were reported as either health-impaired or physically impaired. The percentage of students who were health-impaired or physically impaired in 2001-2 had decreased slightly from a previous high in 1997-98 of 1.52%, although the 2001-2 figure was higher than that in 1993-94 (0.97%).

¹¹These categories are taken directly from data provided by the Tennessee Department of Education at www.state.tn.us/education, and they are used uncritically and non-pejoratively here. Definitions are available at www.tennessee.gov/hitspot/definitions.PDF.